DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 350 660 EA 024 340

AUTHOR Clark, David L.; Astuto, Terry A.
TITLE A Decade of Change in Educational Research on Organizational Structure and Governance. Highlights from the "Encyclopedia of Educational Research."
PUB DATE Apr 92
NOTE 12p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association (San Francisco, CA, April 20-24, 1992).
PUB TYPE Information Analyses (070) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Educational Research; *Educational Theories; Elementary Secondary Education; *Encyclopedias; *Governance; *Organization; Organizational Theories; *Research Methodology
IDENTIFIERS *Encyclopedia of Educational Research

ABSTRACT

The section on "organizational structure and governance" in the sixth edition of the Encyclopedia of Educational Research differs from other editions. It is the first that reflects with some breadth and depth alternative, neo-orthodox perspectives that challenge the traditional understandings of organizing and governing. This nonorthodox body of theory and research is represented in both the methodology of inquiry and the substantive findings of that inquiry. This paper describes the nature of the nonorthodox challenge represented in the encyclopedia and illustrate that challenge in a set of substantive areas. These include the nature of the nonorthodox challenge in terms of the different perspectives on the nature of knowledge, different ways of inquiring, and the impact of the nature of society and the relationship of societal change to social relationships among individuals in organizations. Four substantive illustrations are given to demonstrate how nonorthodox perspectives have altered understanding of organizations and organizing: (1) the role of goals; (2) the processes of decision making; (3) the nature of organizational culture or the social construction of reality; and (4) the nature and processes of organizational change. (RR)

**********
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
**********

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
D. Clark
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

ED350660

# A Decade of Change in Educational Research on Organizational Structure and Governance:

## Highlights from the Encyclopedia of Educational Research

David L. Clark
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Terry A. Astuto
University of Virginia

Presentation at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, San Francisco, 1992. Not for citation without the permission of the authors.

EA 024 340



BEST COPY AVAILABLE

**A Decade of Change in Educational Research on Organizational Structure and Governance:**

**Highlights from the Encyclopedia of Educational Research**

The "organizational structure and governance" section of the 1980 Encyclopedia of Educational Research represented the fruits of neo-orthodox inquiry into organizations and organizational change. That is, the necessity of bureaucracy as an organizational form went unchallenged, positivism and quantitative methods dominated inquiry, and social science frameworks were applied to build an administrative science of organizing. There were initial citations of some of the work on loose coupling and reference to organized anarchies. But that is as far as the 1980 edition went -- casual reference to the non-orthodox theorists.

The Sixth Edition of the Encyclopedia is the first that reflects with some breadth and depth alternative, non-orthodox perspectives that challenge the traditional understandings of organizing and governing. This non-orthodox theory and research is represented in both the methodology of inquiry and the substantive findings of that inquiry. In this paper we describe the nature of the non-orthodox challenge represented in the Encyclopedia and illustrate that challenge in a set of substantive areas.

Nature of the Non-Orthodox Challenge

The "organizational structure and governance" section of the Encyclopedia is more inclusive of alternative perspectives. The theory and research reported in this section share two dimensions

of that greater inclusiveness of perspectives with other fields represented in the Encyclopedia.

First, different perspectives on the nature of knowledge have emerged. These alternative conceptions of the nature of knowledge tolerates different views of reality (a movement from a belief about the importance of objectivity to a belief about the importance of subjectivity or individual perspectives) in understanding organizations. Second, a different understanding of the nature of knowledge requires different ways of inquiring. There have been quite marked changes in the methods used for study emphasizing the utility of both quantitative and qualitative methods, and even including a debate over a variety of qualitative techniques and research paradigms. The methodological changes reveal shifts in both the method of acquiring knowledge and the nature of the knowledge to be acquired.

A more unique feature affecting the research on organization and governance reported in the Encyclopedia is a greater appreciation for the impact of the nature of society and the relationship of societal change to social relationships among individuals in organizations. Non-orthodox organizational theory and research captures new ways of thinking about the nature of the larger society and its institutions. Burrell and Morgan (1980) define this change as a movement from the sociology of regulation a sociology of radical change. This shift is neatly captured, for example, in the effort by a group of radical conservatives (Chubb, Finn, and Doyle) to attempt to de-

institutionalize education. From a quite different perspective the critique of feminist and critical theorists challenge the very necessity of bureaucracy. The latter have focused attention on the power relationships within a hierarchical system and the differential access of individuals to power based on class, race, ethnicity, gender, age, and handicapping conditions.

## Substantive Illustrations

Four illustrations demonstrate how non-orthodox perspectives have altered our understanding of organizations and organizing: (1) the role of goals; (2) the processes of decision making; (3) the nature of organizational culture; and (4) the nature and processes of organizational change.

### Goals

In addition to refining goals-based planning models and continuing to study goal setting as an improvement device in organizations, organizational theory and research over the past decade has begun to reflect a different understanding of the role of goals in thinking about administration and organizing. Even the popular literature in the field asserts that effective organizations have a bias for action. They do things and they learn from doing. In a theoretical sense that inverts the traditional and comfortable notion that intent precedes action and asserts that not occasionally, but routinely, organizations and individuals within organizations discover their intent through acting. The search for knowledge about organizations has to accommodate organizations in which action preceding intent is

neither an aberration nor a pathology, but the way in which organizations discover where they are going, what they should be doing, and what works. It opens up a whole territory of discovery that goal-bound organizations never see.

As an aside, this suggests that the national goals are a delimiting rather than a facilitating feature in the current reform movement in the country. That particular set of six goals represents retrospective sensemaking, not prospective plans. They represent things the individual states were already doing or attempting to do. They are an affirmation of the tactics the states and the federal government had already started. That's usually what goals are. Stated as goals, they limit the activity of individuals who work in the field and consequently constrain action options. A retrospective description of actions already undertaken becomes mistakenly posited as a set of prospective actions to be taken -- which confuses every one. In the end, the national goals will limit learning, since they appear to be a sine qua non feature of a reform movement when, in fact, they may very well be casual elements in a reform movement or a wholly dysfunctional way to portray needed reforms in the educational system. They may lead us in the wrong direction because they imply that we already know where we are going, when we should be examining the significance of where we have been and where we are.

Decision Making

In the 1980 edition of the Encyclopedia, the decision making literature was beginning to break away from the most simplistic of the rational models to construct more comprehensive and useful ways of improving organizational decision making. This has continued over the past decade as theoreticians have examines arational models. The best illustration of the difference in the 1990 encyclopedia is the argument, begun by Cohen, March, and Olsen (1972) and now pursued by a number of other inquirers, that organizational problems and organizational solutions have separate lives. The solutions don't grow out of problems, but become attached to problems. Solutions must be thought of in a generic sense. The National Diffusion Network (NDN) is a good example. Inventors around the country who participate in the NDN have generic solutions to problems in broad educational categories. Those solutions may fit a myriad of problems in schools. Developer-disseminators attempt to attach the solutions to the problems. From time to time they fit a predisposition within organizations because organizations have political preferences about the solutions of problems. The decision process is a constant examination of the problems that the organization is willing to surface and to try to do something about.

This characterization of decision making introduces a whole new set of ways of thinking about how organizations confront problems and why it is that there are persons in organizations

who have a subset of solutions that they carry with them all the time in the hopes that someone will raise a question to which their solution might be attached. The analysis of the streams of problems and solutions in organizations is an arational way to view the question of how decision making occurs in organizations. It helps explain why a superintendent of schools or a national reformer can move from one school district to another district with quite different characteristics carrying in her or his pocket a curricular solution or a scheduling solution or a staffing solution to impose on the new organization. And sometimes they are capable of doing that, at least temporarily. This alternative perspective has generated a different understanding of decision making as it relates to the problematic preferences, the unclear technology, and the fluid participation that occurs in schools as organizations. It opens up a territory for inquiry which will affect not just the study of decision making, but the study of the change process in education.

Culture or the Social Construction of Reality

In the 1980 Encyclopedia, the dominant view of intra-organizational health was labeled organizational climate. The emphasis in the Sixth Edition is identified as organizational culture, reflecting an understanding that the parts of an organization are not only greater than the whole, they are something other than the whole. This is a change deeper than altered terminology. Culture is not something in an organization; culture is something an organization is. It is not under

the control of the managers of the organization; it comes out of the long term interactions among the people who are in the organization. It's rooted in the sensemaking that people bring to the organizational structure. That means to a substantial extent it exists in the way in which people in the organization create the organization. Organizational culture (and consequently the organization) exists in the heads of the people in the organization.

This places a different kind of interpretation on the necessity of multiculturalism and feminism in organizational studies. They become essential, not for political reasons or to satisfy specific groups, but because this individuality is an inherently determinant and positive feature of the organization itself. Once you think this way, once you believe that organizations are multiculturalist and feminist by their nature, you have a possibility of not adjusting the organization to fit different groups, but using the strengths of all the organizational participants to build and create a better organization. Once you think this way you pin organizational failures not on the failure of organizational clients to adjust to the idiosyncracies of the organization, but rather the inability of an organization to adjust dysfunctional structures and practices to the idiosyncracies of its clients and workers. An organization is its clients and workers.

Organizational Change

Organizational change happens one by one, but not alone. The Sixth Edition of the Encyclopedia notes individualistic nature of organizational change. Recognition of this fact has implications for leadership, followership, and structure. Leadership that is most effective in relation to change is facilitative, supportive, and creates safe places for the creativity of people in the organization. It is not directive and controlling. Designated leaders act in ways that recognize that change is individualistic. Notions of followership recognize the role of non-designated leaders and are sensitive to the fact that leadership and creativity are broadly, not narrowly, distributed within the organization. This is reflected in the popular literature on effective organizations by the assertion that the source of organizational productivity is the people in the organization. Discussions of organizational structure are aligned with beliefs about the importance of individual efficacy and creativity. The flurry of work and thinking about restructuring is all directed to complement the different role of leadership with different roles for non-designated leaders in the organization in terms of empowerment, devolution, and facilitation. Organizational modifications, including challenges to the necessity of hierarchy, fit changes in the roles of both leaders and followers.

## Conclusion

In sum, the "organization and governance" section of the revised Encyclopedia reflects the increasing inclusiveness in organizational theory and research of multiple alternative perspectives. The theory and research included represents different ways of thinking about knowledge and different ways of knowing in terms of organizational inquiry. Non-orthodox ways of knowing -- including critical theory and the feminist critique -- not only make the treatment more comprehensive, they provide important and interesting challenges to traditional knowledge and assumptions about organizing.

## References

Burrell, G., & Morgan, G. (1980). Sociological paradigms and organizational analysis. London: Heinemann Educational Books.

Cohen, M., March, J., & Olsen, J. (1972). A garbage can model of organizational choice. Administrataive Science Quarterly, 17 (1), 1-25.